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General Assembly
Seventieth session

Official Records

113th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 27 July 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lykketoft ..... (Denmark)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 121 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly considered agenda item 121 at its 43rd and 44th plenary meetings on 30 October 2015. Members will also recall that, pursuant to the General Assembly decision 69/560 of 14 September 2015, the Assembly continued intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary meetings during the current session.

In a letter dated 21 July 2016, I circulated language for an oral draft decision on this issue for consideration by Member States.

May I now therefore take it that the General Assembly,

Decides to reaffirm the central role of the General Assembly concerning the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council;

Also decides to immediately continue intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform in informal plenary of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, as mandated by Assembly decisions 62/557 of 15 September 2008, 63/565B of 14 September 2009, 64/568 of 13 September 2010, 65/554 of 12 September 2011, 66/566 of 13 September 2012, 67/561 of 29 August 2013, 68/557 of 8 September 2014 and 69/560 of 14 September 2015, building on the informal meetings held during its seventieth session, as well as the positions of and proposals made by Member States, reflected in the text and its annex circulated on 31 July 2015, and using the elements of convergence circulated on 12 July 2016 to help to inform its future work, while welcoming the active engagement, initiatives and intensive efforts of the President of the General Assembly, and noting with appreciation the active role and concrete efforts of the Chair undertaken in a consultative manner with a view to an early comprehensive reform of the Security Council;

Decides to convene an open-ended working group on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, if Member States so decide;

Decides to include, in the agenda of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session, the item, entitled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council"?

The draft oral decision was adopted (decision 70/559).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of position on the oral decision just adopted, I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

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Mr. Minah (Sierra Leone): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of African States, and in doing so let me congratulate you, Mr. President, on your excellent stewardship of the General Assembly at its seventieth session. I wish to express our sincere appreciation for your unwavering commitment and dedication to the reform of the Security Council. The African Group remains steadfastly committed to a comprehensive and meaningful text-based reform of the Security Council. We also appreciate the efforts of the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations during this session and we wish her success in her new assignment.

Let me take this opportunity to thank all Member States for their flexibility, leading to a rollover decision adopted by consensus. I believe that is in the spirit of preserving unity and mutual trust among the membership moving forward with Security Council reform.

In view of our letter of 21 July 2016, Mr. President, which was a response to your letter of 12 July 2016, circulating elements of convergence on two of the five key issues of Security Council reform — namely, the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly and the size of an enlarged Council and the working methods of the Council — we conveyed to you that the elements paper, as presented, must include all five issues of Security Council reform in order for it to be a comprehensive record of the discussions of Member States. We took note of your understanding that the elements of convergence that emerged from the positions and proposals of Member States on those two issues were presented during the intergovernmental negotiations in the seventieth session.

However, this understanding, we have maintained, did not precisely reflect the true record of the intergovernmental meetings. While there was no absolute opposition to the two areas of convergence identified by the Chair, there was certainly an extensive consensus that the paper should include the positions and proposals of the Member States concerning the other three issues of Security Council reform. To that end, a document that addressed only two out of the five key issues of Security Council reform, we believe, can neither be a true basis for informing the future work of the intergovernmental negotiations, nor adequately uphold the momentum we all seek.

The African Group is, however, pleased that the positions and proposals made by Member States, as reflected in the framework document and as circulated by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, will be rolled over to the seventy-first session. Africa will continue to constructively engage with all Member States in mutual trust with a view to achieving equitable geographical representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, with expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories, and thereby ensure a greater legitimacy of its decisions. It is only through such a reform that we can talk of a Security Council that is more representative, democratic, accountable, transparent, effective and efficient.

We look forward to a more constructive and forward-looking intergovernmental negotiating process during the seventy-first session and urge all Member States to work together towards moving the process to text-based negotiations in a manner that will promote unity of purpose in maintaining the values and ideals of the founding fathers of the United Nations — a United Nations fit for purpose and of continuing utility as a centre of global governance.

On a personal note, as I end my role of advocacy and coordination on behalf of the States members of the African Union, I wish to humbly thank all delegations and colleagues who, though their passion, commitment and principled advocacy, have certainly advanced the cause of Security Council reform. I also thank them for their words of advice and wisdom in helping me in carrying out my role.

Mr. De Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): I have the honour to take the floor today on behalf of the Group of Four (G-4), consisting of India, Japan, Germany and my own country, Brazil.

I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting today. The reform of the Security Council is one of the most pressing issues still pending on the agenda of the General Assembly. It is very important that Member States engage in real text-based negotiations if the exercise we are carrying out within the intergovernmental negotiations is to have any meaning.

I would like to express appreciation for the work carried out by the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, during this seventieth session of the General Assembly.

The elements of convergence on two of the five key issues pertaining to the process of the reform of the Security Council can be considered useful to the

extent that they identify some already known trends on the positions and proposals of Member States regarding the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly and the size and working methods of an enlarged Security Council. While not all elements contained in the paper reflect the positions of the G-4, we can see the merit in seeking to capture a sense of convergence while retaining our own positions.

We regret, however, that other important patterns in the remaining three clusters were not reflected as leading towards convergence. It is obvious to any observer that a growing majority of Member States supports expansion of the Security Council in both categories, yet we failed to register such an evident and quantifiable convergence in writing. Member States also argued that the issue of the underrepresentation of developing countries in the current format of the Security Council should be addressed. Such a suggestion was not captured either. We would have preferred to see elements that reflected the positions of participants in a more comprehensive manner.

After the substantial progress achieved during the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, which led to the adoption by consensus of decision 69/560, there was high expectation that the time had arrived for us to move into concrete negotiations. It is unfortunate that the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations was not able to build up momentum with a view to reaching an agreement on such an important item on the agenda of the General Assembly.

As many countries, including some permanent members, have pointed out at the intergovernmental negotiations, the longer we postpone a decision on the reform of the Security Council, the greater will be the discredit brought upon the United Nations in its core function of promoting peace and security. Most of us have already understood that holding on to the status quo cannot be an option. If we are to seriously address the complex challenges to peace and security that affect the everyday lives of millions around the world, we can no longer go around in circles on Security Council reform. At a time when we face the largest refugee crisis since the Second World War and an increased number of civilian victims of armed conflicts worldwide, we need a strong multilateral system to foster peace and security at the core of the United Nations. What people expect from us is bold leadership and commitment to change.

The United Nations has demonstrated a capacity to rise to challenges in a variety of ways. One example of this is the recent adoption by Member States of the ambitious, forward-looking 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (resolution 70/1) and the historic agreement on climate. Progress was also achieved on the human rights pillar of the United Nations system with the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review process. The global financial structure was also strengthened in the face of the 2008 crisis with the quota reform at the international financial institutions and the enlargement of the Group of Seven, which became the Group of 20. It is on peace and security that progress is lacking.

A special note of recognition is due for the initiatives that you, Mr. President, undertook to ensure a more inclusive and transparent selection process for the next Secretary-General. The unprecedented hearings with the candidates were important steps towards the democratization of the selection process and the overall enhancement of the credibility of the United Nations. The process of selecting candidates for the next Secretary-General brought with it a renewed sense that the United Nations can come to terms with the challenges posed by the current century. But this feeling needs to be replicated in the debates on Security Council reform. As former Secretary-General Kofi Annan once reminded us, United Nations reform will not be complete without the reform of the Security Council.

Eight years have elapsed since the launch of the process of intergovernmental negotiations, and yet it has still not been possible to launch a concrete text-negotiating exercise. This is not a sustainable state of affairs. Delegations committed to early reform, as we all should be, should engage more with each other to finally create, within a fixed time frame, a United Nations fit for purpose on peace and security matters.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group.

I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for your leadership during the seventieth session of the General Assembly and for the transparent and inclusive manner in which you have discharge your duties. Similarly, we thank the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Lucas, for the transparent, collegial and inclusive manner in which she has performed her task. The constructive ambiance during the intergovernmental negotiations enabled all delegations

to engage in frank and substantive discussions on all key issues of reform.

The oral decision we have adopted today (decision 70/559) remains a technical rollover. The UfC supported the oral decision, as we firmly believe that its prime purpose is to pave the way for continuing discussions during the seventy-first session of the General Assembly on Security Council reform in the broadest and most consensual manner. Today, the membership has provided a mandate to continue the intergovernmental negotiating process in informal plenary meetings of the General Assembly, as mandated by all previous decisions of the General Assembly on this agenda item. The decision conforms with the following points.

First, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform are a membership-driven process, based on the positions and proposals of all Member States submitted throughout this process. All sessions of the intergovernmental negotiations have made important contributions to the reform process and must be given due consideration when we resume our work.

Secondly, our collective goal in the intergovernmental negotiations, as mentioned in decision 62/557, is a comprehensive reform of the Security Council with a solution that can garner the widest possible political acceptance by Member States.

Thirdly, the elements of convergence on two key issues of reform set forth by the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations reflect her understanding of the positions and proposals of Member States. While Member States, including the UfC group, offered observations on this initiative, we note that no delegation rejected its substantive elements. It can therefore be useful in informing our future work as we strive for further progress. In that regard, the UfC will reiterate that identifying broad convergences among Member States, in particular on the principles and criteria of reform, exemplifies the consensual path needed to achieve concrete results. As to the key issues and areas where divergences persist, we call for flexibility and compromise to achieve convergence.

Finally, we note the reference to the document dated 31 July 2015, together with its annex. On this, the UfC position was conveyed in its statement of 14 September 2015.

The Uniting for Consensus group is ready to continue to engage constructively in future negotiations on the reform of the Security Council. We are convinced that flexibility and the ability to compromise on the part of all delegations can lead the General Assembly to consensual and sustainable reform of the Security Council. To that end, we assure the Assembly of our full cooperation.

We wish all the best to Ambassador Lucas in her future duties.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the L.69 group, a diverse group of 42 developing countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific that are united by the common cause of achieving lasting and comprehensive reform of the Security Council. We align ourselves with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone on behalf of the Group of African States.

On behalf of the L.69 group, I thank you, Sir, for your leadership and guidance throughout the seventieth session. We also thank you for convening this plenary meeting and presenting the rollover oral decision 70/559, which has just been adopted by consensus. We would also like to convey our appreciation to the Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas of Luxembourg, for her efforts to push the process forward. We are happy to note that the framework document and its annex, which were circulated by the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, will remain the basis of the discussion at the intergovernmental negotiations in the next session of the General Assembly.

As you encouraged Member States early in this session, Sir, it is imperative to engage in real text-based negotiations on the basis of the framework document and its annex in the next session. We look forward to continuing to engage with all States Members of the United Nations in a constructive manner on the remaining tricky issues and achieve an early reform of the Security Council. We also hope to open the way for more concrete progress in the seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is an honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Arab States.

First of all, we would like to thank you, Sir, for your efforts in leading the General Assembly and for the attention you have given to one of the most important items on our agenda, namely, the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council. I would also like to thank Her Excellency Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, who did all she could to bring points of view of various Member States and groups of countries closer together in the negotiations.

The Arab Group congratulates you, Sir, on the adoption by consensus of oral decision 70/559. We reaffirm that the Group of Arab States would appreciate the widest possible acceptance of any measure taken in the context of these negotiations with a view to moving towards a just and equitable reform of the Security Council. We would also like to reaffirm the position of the Arab Group, which hopes to avoid discrediting the intergovernmental negotiations by adopting measures that do not represent a consensus among Member States.

After the consensus adoption today, the Arab Group would like to see this debate continue within the framework of the intergovernmental negotiations and the seventy-first session of the General Assembly, taking into account the results achieved in previous sessions. We naturally seek to contribute positively and effectively to future negotiations in order to achieve a consensus that would lead to a solution that embodies true and comprehensive reform of the Council.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

First, we welcome the consensus adoption of decision 70/559 on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council. The decision is a useful reflection of the achievements made on this important issue during the seventieth session of the General Assembly. It also reflects the continuing need to build on the positions and proposals made by Member States set forth in the text and its annex dated 31 July 2015, which provided a solid foundation for our continuing work.

It is obvious that much more needs to be done to make this most important of international organizations equal to the times in which we live and adequate to the challenges of the future. From the CARICOM perspective, the reform of the Security Council is integral and critical to an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core. CARICOM takes this opportunity to thank you, Sir, for your commitment and leadership on this important issue during the current session. We also thank Her Excellency Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, for the guidance and leadership she provided as Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations.

The progress made during the current session, though limited, by all accounts, is nonetheless important. CARICOM hopes that the 31 July text and its annex, along with the elements of convergence of 12 July, will serve as a firm foundation on which we will continue our efforts for the reform of the Security Council in the seventy-first session. In that regard, I would assure the Assembly that the States members of CARICOM remain strongly committed to the quest for early and comprehensive reform of the Security Council.

Like my colleague from Sierra Leone, I will also end on a personal note, as, in a few short days, I will leave the United Nations for a new assignment. I wish to express my thanks to you, Mr. President, and to the entire membership for the support extended to me during my tenure as Permanent Representative of Guyana.

Ms. Frankinet (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of taking the floor on behalf of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Belgium. Like others who have spoken before me, we welcome the consensus adoption of oral decision 70/559, on the reform of the Security Council. I congratulate you, Sir, on the way you have guided the Assembly on this matter.

The decision and the elements paper represent true progress — gradual but real. It is clear nonetheless that we still have a long way to go before we have achieved a substantive reform of the Security Council. Therefore, it is up to us, the States Members of the United Nations, to redouble our efforts and show sufficient flexibility to that end. For their part, Belgium and the Netherlands will continue to be actively involved in that process. I especially wish to thank the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, who, as Chair, led the intergovermental negotiations in a balanced, efficient and transparent manner and carried out the impressive work that has been acknowledged by all.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The General Assembly has just adopted the simple and technical oral decision 70/559, to roll over the intergovernmental negotiating process on Security Council reform to the General Assembly at its next session. Pursuant to decision 62/557 and the consensus of the Member States, the intergovernmental negotiations should uphold the ownership and leadership of Member States and be based on the positions, proposals, suggestions and ideas of the entire membership. The intergovermental negotiating process has been pursued for the past seven years, and has been an integrated process. Over those seven years, all the constructive efforts of Member States have served as a foundation and created momentum to take forward consultations and galvanize consensus. This reality should be fully reflected in the intergovernmental negotiating process.

Since 2009, the intergovernmental negotiations have followed United Nations-led principle, but there have also been several missteps. At the current session, Member States have conducted candid and in-depth discussions on the five categories of issues concerning Security Council reform. The overall atmosphere has been positive, and the intergovernmental negotiations have been put back on the right track of ownership and leadership.

China welcomes the efforts of President Lykketoft and Ambassador Lucas, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg and Chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. It is China's hope that the intergovermental negotiations will continue to uphold the leadership of Member States at the next session and that all sides shall continue to undertake extensive, patient and democratic consultations on the five categories of issues, meet each other half way, gradually foster conditions conducive to identifying a package of solutions, and finally reach the broadest possible consensus. In that regard, China stands ready to contribute alongside all stakeholders to moving forward Security Council reform, in conformity with the common interests of Member States and the long-term interests of the United Nations.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The General Assembly has just adopted oral decision 70/559, rolling over the consideration of the issue of Security Council reform to the seventy-first session. The consensus adoption of the decision has allowed us to avoid creating new dividing lines among the participants of the intergovernmental negotiating process. The course of negotiations on Security Council reform has shown us that we are still far from finding a universal formula for the enlargement of the Council.

Unfortunately, the situation has not changed at the current session of the General Assembly. It is obvious that, because of the great political significance of Security Council reform, it is necessary to continue to seek a package solution that would enjoy the support of a greater number of Member States than the formal mandatory two-thirds majority. Ideally, we would need a consensus. Such work must be carried out in a transparent and inclusive manner without creating artificial timelines, and taking into account the full gamut of positions of Member States. The decision that we adopted today speaks to exactly that.

In conclusion, we thank the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, Ms. Sylvie Lucas, and her entire delegation for the highly qualified and responsible manner in which they discharged their responsibility for coordinating intergovernmental negotiations at the current session. We wish Ambassador Lucas every success in her future endeavours.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I take this opportunity to make several remarks as the General Assembly prepares to conclude its review of the issue of reform of the Security Council at the seventieth session.

I wish first to thank you, Mr. President, for your trust and support throughout this session. It has been an honour to chair, on your behalf, the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. When you entrusted me with this mandate in October 2015, I understood the difficulty of the task. Today, I have an even better idea of that difficulty. My thanks also go to the Member States and the groups of Member States that participated constructively in our meetings and answered my entreaty by offering their views on the substance of Security Council reform and identifying the points of convergence within the positions of other Member States or groups of Member States.

On 30 October, I made a commitment to the General Assembly to do my best to move forward negotiations on Security Council reform. Our meetings this year have allowed us to discuss all key issues in connection with that reform, including categories of membership, the veto, regional representation, the size and working methods of an enlarged Security Council, and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

The statements made by Member States in our meetings and the consequent references to their positions, reflected in the text and annex circulated on 31 July 2015, have led to the emergence of elements of convergence on two of the five key aforementioned issues: the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly, and the size and working methods of an enlarged Security Council. I am convinced that these elements of convergence, circulated by the President of the General Assembly on 12 July, will be useful for the follow-up of the negotiations, bearing in mind that Security Council reform can only be a comprehensive one that addresses the five key questions.

I have tried at this session to listen to all Member States. I have worked independently and impartially to promote an environment conducive to progress in the negotiations. Any progress we have been able to make towards Security Council reform — even if modestly — is due to the commitment and cooperation of all our colleagues and their teams.Much remains to be done to achieve Security Council reform. The stakes are high, but if Member States are committed and negotiate in good faith, reform is not impossible. Reform is possible, and it is more necessary than ever to the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 121?

It was so decided.

The President: Before adjourning, I wish to announce that this will be the last meeting of Mr. Ion Botnaru, Director of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. Mr. Botnaru's contribution to the smooth running of meetings in the Assembly has been truly significant, and I should like the Assembly to give him a round of applause in appreciation. We wish him all the best.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.